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No. 68

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

ANNUAL REPORT

of

Commissioner of Veterans' Services

for the years

1966-1967

Government Documents
Collection

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OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF VETERANS' SERVICES
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON

July 1, 1967

Senate and House of Representatives
Senate Lobby
Senate House
Boston, Massachusetts

the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:

In compliance with the requirements of Chapter 115, Section 2, General Laws, as amended, I submit to you the annual report of the Commissioner of Veterans' Services for 1966 and 1967.

The section which relates to Veterans' Benefits is for the calendar year 1966 and 1967.

There are also sections relating to the various divisions of the department.

This report also includes a detailed statement of the receipts and expenditures for personnel and incidentals for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1966 and June 30, 1967.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES N. COLLATOS

Commissioner

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING
JUNE 30, 1966

Salaries of Commissioner and 2 Deputies (3).....	\$ 30,374.00
Salaries of Permanent Employees (87).....	466,444.00
Salaries of Temporary Employees (11).....	9,928.00
Total Cost for Salaries.....	<u>\$ 506,746.00</u>
Maintenance Costs:	
Printing.....	\$ 3,853.00
Travel and Auto.....	22,772.00
Repairs to Office Equipment, etc.....	525.00
Office Supplies (telephone, postage, etc.).....	12,298.00
Rental of Equipment (typewriters, etc.).....	—
New Equipment (typewriters, etc.).....	—
Miscellaneous.....	<u>500.00</u>
Total Maintenance Costs.....	<u>39,948.00</u>
Total Salaries and Maintenance Costs.....	<u><u>\$ 546,694.00</u></u>
Reimbursements to Cities and Towns on Account of Veterans' Benefits.....	\$12,014,334.00
Annuities to Blind and Paraplegic Veterans.....	\$ 131,773.00

Financial Statement Verified
(Under requirements of C. 7, S. 00 GL)
August 1, 1966
By THOMAS J. SULLIVAN
For the Comptroller
Approved for Publishing
M. JOSEPH STACEY, *Comptroller*

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING
JUNE 30, 1967

Salaries of Commissioner and 2 Deputies (3).....	\$ 34,712.00
Salaries of Permanent Employees (87).....	526,000.00
Salaries of Temporary Employees (11).....	11,600.00
Total Cost for Salaries.....	<u>\$ 572,312.00</u>
Maintenance Costs:	
Printing.....	\$ 5,200.00
Travel and Auto.....	24,500.00
Repairs to Office Equipment, etc.....	550.00
Office Supplies (telephone, postage, etc.).....	14,685.00
Rental of Equipment (typewriters, etc.).....	300.00
New Equipment (typewriters, etc.).....	300.00
Miscellaneous.....	<u>511.00</u>
Total Maintenance Costs.....	<u>46,046.00</u>
Total Salaries and Maintenance Costs.....	<u><u>\$ 618,358.00</u></u>
Reimbursements to Cities and Towns on Account of Veterans' Benefits.....	\$11,576,598.00
Annuities to Blind and Paraplegic Veterans.....	\$ 139,611.00
Chapter 483.....	\$ 12,628.00

Financial Statement Verified
(Under requirements of C. 7, S. 19 GL)
August 10, 1967
By THOMAS J. SULLIVAN
For the Comptroller
Approved for Publishing
M. JOSEPH STACEY, *Comptroller*

VETERANS' BENEFITS

Chapter 115, General Laws, as amended

Veterans' Benefits are paid to a veteran or dependent by the city or town of legal settlement or residence by the local Agent, with recommendation, to the Office of the Commissioner of Veterans' Services. Payments are in accordance with the regulations and directives as promulgated by the Commissioner when the necessity thereof is occasioned by illness or unemployment. The Commonwealth shall reimburse the cities and towns to the amount of one-half authorized and actually paid in settled cases.

In State Settled cases, application is filed in the city or town of residence, and cities or towns of residence are reimbursed in full by the Commonwealth.

Section 2 provides the Commissioner with the authority to act as agent and attorney of and for all departments, boards and commissions of the Commonwealth, including the department of correction and the institutions under its control, in all matters before the Veterans Administration of the United States government involving any question of federal compensation or pension to which any veteran or dependent under the care or supervision of such departments, boards and commissions may be entitled, and involving any question of reimbursement of the Commonwealth for assistance, care, board or hospitalization of any such veteran or dependent. Each such department, board and commission shall notify him, in writing, of all such veterans or dependents who are inmates of any hospital or other institution under the supervision of, or in receipt of direct financial assistance from, such department, board or commission. Such notification shall be on forms to be prepared by him and shall contain such information as he may require to enable him to proceed properly in matters of federal compensation or pension for such veterans or dependents, and in matters of reimbursement of the Commonwealth for assistance, care, board or hospitalization of such veterans or dependents.

Section 3a provides that upon the request of any veteran, the veterans' agent for the city or town in which he resides shall record his discharge or release papers, without charge, in books kept by him for that purpose. Said agent shall keep an index of papers so recorded, and copies thereof, if attested by him, shall be admissible in evidence to the same extent and with the same effect as the originals.

Burial allowance is provided for certain veterans and their dependents in accordance with the provisions of the statute. The burial agent, under the regulations established by the Commissioner, shall cause properly to be interred the body of any veteran or adult dependent who dies without sufficient means to defray funeral expenses, and the body of any dependent child of a veteran if such veteran and his wife, or widow, be without sufficient means to defray funeral expenses.

Chapter 115 of the General Laws, as amended by Chapter 660, Acts of 1949, Chapter 530, Acts of 1953, and Chapter 567, Acts of 1956, provides for the payment of an annuity of \$500 per annum, to be paid monthly to the following:

A veteran who, according to the records of the Veterans Administration of the United States government, has suffered permanent impairment of vision of both eyes of the following status: central visual acuity of 5/200 or less in the better eye, with corrective glasses, or central visual acuity of 5/200 if there is a field defect in which the peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest

diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than twenty degrees in the better eye; a veteran who is suffering from paraplegia and has permanent paralysis of both legs and lower parts of the body, resulting from traumatic injury to the spinal cord or brain, sustained through enemy action, or accident while in such military or naval service, and a veteran who has permanent paralysis of both legs and lower parts of the body, resulting from malaria, anemia, other forms of disease, tumors or poisoning which may produce signs and symptoms similar to those resulting from traumatic paraplegia and certified by said Veterans Administration to be service-connected for wartime service.

A veteran to be eligible must have resided in Massachusetts at time of acceptance for wartime service, and must be domiciled in Massachusetts while in receipt of the grant. During fiscal year 1967, a total of 292 cases were processed for this annuity.

Section 9 provides for a veterans' graves officer to cause every veteran's grave within such city or town to be suitably kept and cared for. Such care shall include the clearing of weeds and other unseemly growth from said graves; the raising and repairing of sunken grave stones and markers and other similar services that may be necessary to restore and maintain such graves and their surroundings in an orderly condition. He shall also place on the grave of each veteran a flag of the United States on every Memorial Day.

The following are the reimbursements made by the Commonwealth during the calendar year 1965:

	<i>50% Veterans' Benefits</i>	<i>100% Veterans' Benefits</i>	<i>Burial</i>	<i>Total</i>
January.....	\$ 686,293.60	\$ 26,595.17	\$ 2,136.50	\$ 715,136.50
February.....	751,451.97	27,153.69	1,610.00	780,215.66
March.....	805,302.32	28,919.25	2,217.75	836,439.32
April.....	783,823.60	31,377.94	2,216.50	817,418.04
May.....	724,282.52	32,442.91	1,311.05	758,036.48
June.....	705,509.60	30,258.31	962.50	736,730.41
July.....	689,629.19	28,269.02	1,986.50	719,884.71
August.....	683,898.49	28,467.37	466.50	712,832.36
September.....	701,503.35	24,496.32	75.00	726,074.67
October.....	712,984.36	26,395.33	—	739,379.69
November.....	691,393.92	29,453.51	862.20	721,709.63
December.....	860,155.85	29,991.59	756.75	890,904.19
	<u>\$8,796,228.77</u>	<u>\$343,820.41</u>	<u>\$14,601.25</u>	<u>\$9,154,650.43</u>

Legislation in 1965 Affecting the Office of the Commissioner of Veterans' Services

Chapter 483 — An act providing financial aid to certain needy dependents of certain persons in the service of the armed forces of the United States.

Chapter 712 — An act providing for the transfer of Veterans' Bonus Commission to the State Treasurer's Office.

Chapter 875 — An act providing certain rights and privileges of certain personnel serving in Vietnam.

Cases approved on monthly Returns for Veterans' Benefits for calendar year 1965:

	<i>Settled</i> <i>Veterans' Benefits</i>	<i>Unsettled</i> <i>Veterans' Benefits</i>	<i>Total</i>
January.....	\$ 11,643.00	\$ 228.00	\$ 11,871.00
February.....	12,173.00	220.00	12,393.00
March.....	12,746.00	231.00	12,977.00
April.....	12,168.00	215.00	12,383.00
May.....	11,720.00	222.00	11,942.00
June.....	11,784.00	233.00	12,017.00
July.....	11,634.00	215.00	11,849.00
August.....	11,567.00	212.00	11,779.00
September.....	11,559.00	210.00	11,769.00
October.....	11,511.00	188.00	11,699.00
November.....	11,400.00	186.00	11,586.00
December.....	12,405.00	194.00	12,599.00
	<u>\$142,310.00</u>	<u>\$2,554.00</u>	<u>\$144,864.00</u>

The following are the reimbursements made by the Commonwealth during the calendar year 1966:

	<i>50% Veterans'</i> <i>Benefits</i>	<i>100% Veterans'</i> <i>Benefits</i>	<i>Burial</i>	<i>Total</i>
January.....	\$ 765,974.10	\$ 37,883.28	\$ 1,970.00	\$ 805,827.38
February.....	756,171.89	32,532.24	859.15	789,563.28
March.....	808,857.86	36,409.62	375.00	845,642.48
April.....	763,364.54	7,772.59	2,317.00	773,454.13
May.....	779,581.48	3,825.29	2,925.75	786,332.52
June.....	891,038.69	2,779.60	875.23	894,693.52
July.....	800,775.83	251.25	1,074.50	802,101.58
August.....	765,573.56	1,403.72	2,139.00	769,116.28
September.....	749,282.08	169.50	—	749,451.58
October.....	789,857.91	28.00	2,327.00	792,212.00
November.....	792,432.77	248.10	3,066.20	795,747.07
December.....	892,356.42	46.50	988.25	893,391.17
	<u>\$9,555,267.13</u>	<u>\$123,349.69</u>	<u>\$18,917.08</u>	<u>\$9,697,533.90</u>

Legislation in 1966 Affecting the Office of the Commissioner of Veterans' Services

Chapter 570 — An act providing for an increase in the burial allowance for certain veterans and their dependents.

Cases approved on monthly Returns for Veterans' Benefits for calendar year 1966:

	<i>Settled</i> <i>Veterans' Benefits</i>	<i>Unsettled</i> <i>Veterans' Benefits</i>	<i>Total</i>
January.....	\$ 12,026.00	\$224.00	\$ 12,250.00
February.....	11,984.00	226.00	12,210.00
March.....	12,538.00	242.00	12,780.00
April.....	11,972.00	69.00	12,041.00
May.....	11,893.00	38.00	11,931.00
June.....	13,220.00	41.00	13,261.00
July.....	13,101.00	5.00	13,106.00
August.....	12,672.00	5.00	12,677.00
September.....	12,589.00	3.00	12,592.00
October.....	12,544.00	2.00	12,546.00
November.....	12,749.00	3.00	12,752.00
December.....	13,331.00	4.00	13,335.00
	<u>\$152,619.00</u>	<u>\$862.00</u>	<u>\$151,481.00</u>

ASSIGNMENTS AND LIENS

Chapter 493 of the Acts of 1954 is an Act to indemnify the Commonwealth and Cities and Towns thereof in certain Veterans' Benefits cases.

The following monies were reimbursed this Department under this legislation:

July 1, 1966 to June 30, 1967 \$137,769.55

Chapter 487 of the Acts of 1958, as amended, is an Act creating a lien upon the real estate of certain recipients of Veterans' Benefits.

The following monies were reimbursed this Department under this legislation:

July 1, 1966 to June 30, 1967 \$ 29,207.30

CONTACT OFFICE

The Contact Office of the Department of Veterans' Services is located in the Boston Regional Office of the Veterans Administration at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Federal Building, Boston, Massachusetts. In this office we have seven (7) full-time paid employees properly accredited to present claims before the Veterans Administration. In addition to these seven (7) accredited male representatives, this office has three (3) full-time female stenographic employees, also accredited by the Veterans Administration.

The objective of this office is to help care for and maintain Massachusetts veterans and their dependents with a minimum cost to the taxpayer of the Commonwealth. Specifically, this office acts as a liaison office between the State and Federal agencies and other State Governments, and between state and private agencies concerning veterans' problems and Federal assistance to veterans. Its principal instrument is the Power-of-Attorney (VA form 23-22) from which, when signed by a veteran or his dependent or heir, authorizes the Commissioner of Veterans' Services to act as a legal representative of such person in all matters pertaining to the prosecution and settlement of such claims on account of military service. This office has been accredited by Congress and by the General Court (S.N. 22; Ch. 6 G.L.) to represent the interest of approximately 900,000 veterans and/or their dependents residing throughout the Commonwealth.

This office is staffed with skilled specialists who prepare, develop, and prosecute claims for veterans and/or their dependents for benefits that they are entitled to under the laws of the Veterans Administration. Office space in the Veterans Administration is absolutely essential in order that we may properly prepare and review all requests for Pensions, Compensations, etc., by having access to the Veterans' folders and being close to all of the various divisions of the Veterans Administration. If we were deprived of this space, it would work a hardship on our veterans' agents and also the veterans and their dependents as there would be a considerable delay in checking the folders and rendering the fine service that we have given over the years to our veterans in the Commonwealth.

The types of claims and services include:

- (a) Compensation; Pension; Dependency and Indemnity Benefits; Disability Insurance; NSLI; Review of discharges; Obtainment of disability retirement pay when denied by the Armed Forces.
- (b) Assistance with applications for prosthetic appliances; medical, dental and hospital care; burial allowance; accrued benefits; guardianship; and emergency hospital and medical care.

- (c) Assisting and guiding applicants who have problems relating to their education and/or training programs.
- (d) Applicants are given assistance in connection with their Veterans Administration Home Loan Guaranty Programs.

This office maintains a working liaison with approximately three hundred and fifty-one (351) local and district directors of Veterans Services relative to all Veterans Administration matters. Since local agents are not accredited and do not have access to the records in the custody of the Veterans Administration, it logically follows that such cases be referred to our Contact Office, if veteran or dependent wishes us to have the Power-of-Attorney for successive actions involving review of records and appearance before the Veterans Administration officials. On all cases requiring development, the local agent and/or the veteran is contacted and advised as to how to procure such evidence.

Each Wednesday, a contact man goes to the Providence Office of the Veterans Administration in order to service all the needs of our veterans and their dependents of this State, who come under the jurisdiction of the Providence Office. He handles approximately sixty-seven (67) cases each Wednesday, which have been referred to him by our local agents located south of Plymouth. His scope of work covers every phase of Federal benefits available to a veteran and/or his dependents.

A review of our Annual Report will show that this office procured compensation and pensions for veterans and their dependents in the amount of \$4,870,457.23. Approximately 70% of this amount is reflected in the great savings to the cities and towns by reducing the amount of veterans' aid to be paid, which helps to keep the tax rate down. This money is also instrumental in aiding local business. As evidence by previous annual reports, you can readily see that there is a marked increase in the work load of the office. This has been a tremendous burden on our already overworked staff in trying to expeditiously carry out their assigned duties. Each year, compensation cases are becoming much more difficult to service-connect, due to lapse of time since World War II and Korean hostilities. There is more demand, not only on the time, but the knowledge required by our staff to carefully scrutinize and prepare each case in order that every Federal Benefit possible be given to the veteran or his dependent.

The attached sheets will summarize the work performed by this office in the Boston Regional Office of the Veterans Administration. This summary will also show that this office is very vital to the needs of our veteran population of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as we are daily serving and assisting veterans and their dependents in obtaining all the benefits they are entitled to under the Federal Laws as administered by the Veterans Administration.

The quality of service of our Contact Office has been excellent over the years. Due to the reduction in Veterans Administration personnel and the closing of many outside Veterans Administration offices, our work load has shown a sharp increase due to the demands of our veteran population seeking help through our Veterans Services' Agents and Directors located in the three hundred and fifty-one (351) cities and towns of the Commonwealth and pensions for veterans and dependents will not be reached until 1980 to 1990. Therefore, Veterans' Services definitely anticipate an increase in the scope of operations for the next twenty to

thirty years. This is due to the fact that veterans are getting older and will be seeking pensions, hospitalization and medical care. If the veteran is not living, his dependents will be seeking these Federal Benefits as well as State Aid.

ACTIVITIES PERFORMED DURING THE FISCAL YEAR

JULY 1, 1966 THROUGH JUNE 30, 1967

1. Personal visits by veterans and/or their dependents to office..	19,487
2. New claims for compensation and pension including life and death.....	8,251
3. Requests for review — old or disallowed cases.....	6,875
4. New claim for dental and medical Out-Patient treatment.....	2,185
5. Arrangements made for hospitalization.....	2,878
6. Arrangements made for Out-Patient Medical Treatment.....	4,657
7. Arrangements made for Dental Treatment.....	487
8. Cases reviewed at Service Tables.....	16,814
9. Board appearances and hearings.....	5,274
10. Interviews with agents.....	1,875
11. Federal Insurance cases.....	2,285
12. Educational and Rehabilitation Problems.....	2,190
13. Handling physical evaluation board retirement cases for physical disability retirement.....	816
14. Loan Guaranty cases at \$10,000.00 each.....	9,147
15. Checking Veterans Administration Finance for Agents.....	6,184
16. Requests for Civil Service Letters.....	432
17. Requests for Tax Abatement Letters.....	2,195
18. Veterans Benefits referred from Veterans Administration and Service Organizations.....	4,195
19. Assisting veterans in preparing State Bonus Applications.....	87
20. Contacting Legal Divisions regarding appointment of Fiduciary of Incompetent Veterans.....	2,174
21. Federal money granted to Massachusetts.....	\$4,870,457.23
22. Telephone calls received.....	27,214
23. Pieces of mail received.....	21,832
24. Providence VA Regional Office cases handled.....	3,875

HOSPITAL CONTACT DIVISION

The Division endeavors to extend contact service to veterans undergoing hospitalization in public, private and VA hospitals within the Commonwealth and to provide cooperation and assistance to other Departments of the Commonwealth and local Veterans' Agents wherever appropriate.

One fundamental activity is the continuing effort to establish and develop the entitlement of veteran-patients within the State Mental Hospitals for transfer to VA hospitals and for monetary benefits. Advice and assistance is extended to veterans seeking direct admissions to VA General Medical Hospitals for treatment of physical disorders.

Massachusetts is favored with three capacious VA hospitals primarily for care and treatment of veterans suffering from neuropsychiatric disorders; one at Northampton, another at Brockton and a third at Bedford. Also, the Boston VA Hospital maintains a section assigned to treatment of veterans suffering from acute neuropsychiatric disorders. Notwithstanding these generous VA facilities, there are present under psychiatric care in our State Hospitals approximately 2,100 veterans, most of whom are eligible for admission to VA hospitals on a Non-Service Connected basis, if and when VA facilities become available. We endeavor to sustain consciousness of these veterans by the VA and to insure commensurate review of their entitlement for transfer to VA hospitals.

We wish to express our thanks for the cooperation and consideration extended by the various employees of the several State and VA hospitals, by the Regional and Field Offices of the VA, by the local Veterans' Agents, and others whose fine cooperation has enabled the Division to perform its function effectively.